Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of:)		FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Advanced Television Systems and Their Impact Upon the Existing Television Broadcast Service)))	MM Docket No. 87-268	

TO: The Commission

COMMENTS OF CORRIDOR TELEVISION, L.L.P. ON PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION FILED BY PAPPAS TELECASTING OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, L.L.C.

On behalf of Corridor Television, L.L.P. ("Corridor"), permittee of KBEJ(TV) in Fredericksburg, Texas, we hereby file comments in substantial support of the Petition for Reconsideration of the Commission's Memorandum Opinion and Order on Reconsideration of the Fifth Report and Order ("Fifth Report and Order Reconsideration"), filed by Pappas Telecasting of Southern California, L.L.C. ("Pappas"). Pappas urges the Commission to partially reconsider its Fifth Report and Order Reconsideration insofar as the Commission limited eligibility for digital television ("DTV") channel allotments to those persons who held licenses or construction permits for full power analog television stations as of April 3, 1997.

Corridor supports that proposal to the extent described herein. Specifically, Corridor urges the Commission to issue DTV allotments to those parties who filed

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Pappas is the permittee of KBJO(TV) in Avalon, California, which application, like Corridor's, was filed prior to October 24, 1991 and granted after April 13, 1997. Pappas' original petition was originally also filed on behalf of Pappas Telecasting of the Midlands, permittee of a station in Ames, Iowa. However, that application was filed in 1995 and is therefore not in the same procedural posture as KBJO(TV) and Corridor's station, KBEJ(TV).

applications prior to October 24, 1991, but which applications were granted subsequent to the Commission's arbitrary cutoff date of April 3, 1997.² There is nothing in Section 336 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 ("1996 Act") that requires use of a cutoff date to determine eligibility for a DTV allotment. Corridor's application for KBEJ(TV) was filed well prior to October 24, 1991, but not granted until July 28, 1997, less than three months after the Commission's arbitrary cutoff date.

Background

Corridor's application for VHF NTSC Channel 2 in Fredericksburg, Texas was filed on December 19, 1986 under the name Global Information Technologies, Inc. ("Global"), FCC File No. BPCT-861219KG. Following a lengthy (and eventually frozen) comparative hearing, Global filed a Joint Request for Approval of Settlement Agreement on September 19, 1996 ("Joint Request"), contemplating Global's merger with another applicant for this station, Fredericksburg Channel 2, and dismissal of the remaining applications. The Joint Request was granted by the Commission by *Order* adopted July 28, 1997, *Global Information Technologies, Inc.*, 12 F.C.C.Rcd. 11808 (1997). A construction permit was granted to the merged entity (*i.e.*, Corridor) by Commission *Order* adopted December 19, 1997, FCC 97I-40.

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² Corridor strongly disagrees with Pappas' proposal to limit DTV eligibility to those situations where the permittee can demonstrate the availability of a core channel DTV allotment. If a station is eligible for a paired DTV allotment, the issue of which channel to allot should be dealt with separately. Indeed, KBEJ was initially awarded a paired DTV allotment on Channel 38, which it subsequently lost when the Commission determined it was ineligible because its application had not been granted as of April 3, 1997. (See Exhibit 1). An eligible permittee should not be prejudiced by the fact that the Commission has since modified the DTV Table of Allotments so as to render Channel 38 (or any other core channel) currently unavailable as a paired DTV allotment.

When the Commission first considered eligibility for DTV (formerly known as "advanced television" or "ATV") channels, initial eligibility was to be limited to existing broadcasters, defined as follows:

(1) All full-service television broadcast station licensees;
(2) permittees authorized as of the date of adoption of the Notice (October 24, 1991); and (3) all parties with applications for a construction permit on file as of October 24, 1991, who are ultimately awarded full-service television broadcast station licenses.

Memorandum Opinion and Order/Third Report and Order/Third Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket No. 87-268, 7 F.C.C. Rcd. 6924, 6930 (1992) (emphases added), citing Second Report and Order/Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket No. 87-268, 7 F.C.C. Rcd. 3340, 3343 (1992). Since Corridor's application had been on file since December 19, 1986, Corridor clearly qualified for initial eligibility under the third criterion. Indeed, the Commission's proposed allotment table allotted DTV Channel 38 as a paired channel with Channel 2 in Fredericksburg, Texas. See Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket No. 87-268 ("Sixth Further Notice"), 11 F.C.C. Rcd. 10968, 11053 (Appendix B) (attached as Exhibit 1 hereto).

When the Commission released its final Table of Allotments just nine months later, however, the paired DTV allotment for Fredericksburg, Texas had been mysteriously deleted from the Table. *See Sixth Report and Order* in MM Docket No. 87-268, 12 F.C.C. Rcd. 14588, Table 1 (1997). This deletion was apparently due to the fact that Corridor's application for Channel 2 had not yet been granted by the Commission, following the Commission's new interpretation of Section 336(a)(1) of the 1996 Act. That statutory section provides that the Commission:

should limit the initial eligibility for such [DTV] licenses to persons that, as of the date of such issuance, are licensed to operate a television broadcast station or hold a permit to construct such a station (or both)

47 U.S.C. § 336(a)(1) (emphasis added). Interpreting the emphasized wording to refer to the date of issuance of the initial DTV Table of Allotments (a reading NOT mandated or even contemplated by the wording of the statute), the Commission deleted the paired DTV allotment originally proposed for Channel 2 in Fredericksburg, Texas, while stating in a footnote:

We will give particular consideration for assigning temporary DTV channels to new licensees who applied on or before October 24, 1991, given the reliance that these parties may have placed on rules we adopted before passage of the 1996 Act.

Fifth Report and Order in MM Docket No. 87-268, 12 F.C.C. Rcd. 12809, 12817, n. 26 (1997) (emphases added). Similarly, in the Sixth Report and Order, the Commission stated as follows:

We intend to give particular consideration to those parties who had applications for a construction permit on file as of October 24, 1991, who are ultimately awarded a full-service broadcast station license, given the reliance that these parties may have placed on the scheme we established before passage of the Telecomm Act.

Sixth Report and Order, n. 161.

The Commission's revised reading of Section 336 is baffling since the 1996

Act had not only been passed prior to the Commission's adoption of its proposed DTV Table

of Allotments, but the Commission had even cited to Section 336 in determining that "all

parties with applications for a construction permit on file as of October 24, 1991, who are

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ultimately awarded full-service broadcast station licenses," would be eligible for a paired DTV channel allotment. See Sixth Further Notice, ¶ 10, n. 14.3

A. Corridor Should Be Considered Eligible for a DTV Allotment Under the 1996 Act

The 1996 Act was signed into law on February 8, 1996. More than five months later, the Commission issued its *Sixth Further Notice*, which specifically referenced Section 201 of the 1996 Act (which contained 47 U.S.C. § 336), which states in relevant part as follows:

If the Commission determines to issue additional licenses for advanced television services, the Commission --

(1) should limit the initial eligibility for such licenses to persons that, as of the date of such issuance, are licensed to operate a television broadcast station or hold a permit to construct such a station (or both)

47 U.S.C. § 336(a)(1). The Commission did not then read that statutory section as requiring the DTV Table of Allotments to exclude allotments for pending applications. To the

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Although the Commission's initially proposed DTV Table of Allotments assigned Channel 38 to Fredericksburg, Texas, the final Table of Allotments not only deleted that channel, but made other changes that currently do not allow for any paired channel in the core spectrum in Fredericksburg, Texas in compliance with the Commission's technical criteria. However, as specified in the Commission's Memorandum Opinion and Order on Reconsideration of the Sixth Report and Order in MM Docket No. 87-268 ("Sixth Report and Order Reconsideration"), F.C.C. 98-24 (released Feb. 23, 1998), there are "189 other analog stations with out-of-core DTV allotments." Id., ¶ 54. Accordingly, if it is too late to further modify the DTV Table of Allotments, the Commission may specify a DTV channel outside of the core spectrum, consistent with Congressional intent, Commission policy and the public interest. On July 13, 1998, Corridor filed a Petition for Rulemaking and accompanying waiver request with just such a proposal. This Petition remains pending, and its receipt has yet to be formally acknowledged by the Commission.

contrary, the Commission stated that its allotment approach would consider "eligible existing broadcasters" to include "all parties with applications for a construction permit on file as of October 24, 1991, who are ultimately awarded full-service broadcast station licenses." Sixth Further Notice, ¶ 10.

Indeed, Section 336(a)(1) does not even mention the DTV Table of Allotments. Rather, it states that "initial eligibility for such [DTV] licenses" should be those who "are licensed to operate a television broadcast station or hold a permit to construct such a station (or both)" "as of the date of such issuance." In other words, it is clear that Congress thought that DTV (or then, ATV) licenses should be issued initially only to licensees or permittees. There is no reason why the Commission could not have released a DTV Table of Allotments including a DTV allotment for all NTSC channels for which applications had been filed (since the Commission has decided not to license any currently vacant and unapplied for NTSC channels), in order to provide a DTV license to the NTSC permittee or licensee, once it is determined who that party will be. Thus, the Commission's proposed DTV allotment for Fredericksburg, Texas was not inconsistent with Section 336, since that DTV license would not be "issued" before the NTSC permit for Channel 2 was issued to Corridor.

Despite the Commission's logical interpretation of Section 336 in July 1996, that interpretation inexplicably changed by April 1997 when the *Fifth* and *Sixth Reports and Orders* were adopted. The Commission now reads Section 336 as prohibiting any DTV allotments for NTSC channels where applications were still pending as of April 3, 1997. *See*

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Fifth Report and Order Reconsideration, ¶¶ 4-6.4 The Commission accomplished this by declaring that the DTV Table of Allotments has created a "single, paired license." Fifth Report and Order, ¶ 59. Thus, the Commission's current position is apparently that mere creation of the DTV Table of Allotments constitutes "issuance" of the DTV license for purposes of Section 336. Id., ¶¶ 68-69. This is a fiction which has no basis in the statute or in Commission precedent. Each DTV channel will have a separate construction period, requiring the filing of an FCC Form 301, which must be followed by a license application on FCC Form 302. Id., ¶¶ 71-75. Thus, under the Commission's logic, it is ostensibly issuing two "licenses" for each DTV channel.

Since the only licensing scheme that existed prior to creation of the DTV Table was the traditional construction permit (Form 301)/license (Form 302) scheme, Congress was almost certainly referring to that licensing scheme in Section 336. Congress did not direct the Commission to issue two DTV "licenses" and could not have anticipated that the Commission would equate creation of the DTV Table of Allotments with "issuance" of the DTV license for purposes of Section 336 eligibility. Indeed, a plain reading of the statute makes clear that Congress did *not* anticipate that the Commission would consider the NTSC and DTV channels to constitute a single license: (1) Section 336(a) refers to "additional licenses for advanced television services "; (2) Section 336(c) requires Commission recovery of "either the additional [DTV] license or the original license held by the licensee "; and

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In the Fifth Report and Order Reconsideration, the Commission finds one NTSC permittee "eligible" by virtue of the Commission's issuance of a construction permit "on April 2, 1997, one day before the adoption date of the Fifth Report and Order." Id., ¶ 5. Thus, the Commission declares that permittee eligible by virtue of its holding of a construction permit "as of the date of issuance of the DTV licenses." Id., ¶ 6.

(3) Section 336(f) requires evaluations within 10 years after the Commission "first issues additional licenses for advanced television services," evaluating the willingness of consumers to purchase DTV receivers and assessing alternative uses of the frequencies. It would have made no sense to tie consumer television receiver purchases to the date the DTV Table of Allotments is established, since Congress knew no stations would be broadcasting DTV on that date. Clearly, Congress was associating "licenses" with broadcasting, as the Commission has always done before.

If Congress had wanted to limit eligibility to those who held licenses or construction permits as of the date of creation of the DTV Table, it would have used the word "determination" in place of "issuance" in Section 336(a)(1) to limit initial eligibility to licensees and permittees as of the date the Commission "determines to issue additional licenses for advanced television services . . ." (rather than the date the Commission "issues" those licenses, as Congress in fact provided).

Clearly, the Commission interpreted Section 336 correctly in July 1996, when it created paired DTV allotments for NTSC channels for which applications were then pending, knowing that the DTV licenses would not be issued prior to issuance of the paired NTSC construction permit or license, consistent with Section 336. As discussed above, there is no support in Section 336 for the Commission's unilateral April 1997 decision to delete those DTV allotments. Thus, we urge the Commission to reconsider its April 1997 reading of

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⁵Perhaps the Commission created the fiction of equating the DTV Table of Allotments with issuance of the DTV licenses for the very purpose of reducing the number of DTV channels needed. In any event, this was a unilateral policy determination (*i.e.*, not a legal requirement) that cannot be blamed on Congress.

Section 336 and to recognize that it is not inconsistent with Section 336 to allot a DTV channel to Fredericksburg, Texas based on the application that had been pending for the NTSC channel there since 1986.

B. Corridor is Entitled to 'Particular Consideration' As An Applicant Prior to October 24, 1991

Regardless of the Commission's interpretation of Section 336, Corridor is entitled to the "particular consideration" specified by the Commission in both the *Fifth* and *Sixth Reports and Orders*, on the basis of its application having been pending since prior to October 24, 1991. Certainly, beginning with the Commission's *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* in MM Docket No. 87-268, adopted on that date, through the Commission's proposed DTV Table of Allotments released August 14, 1996, Corridor had every reason to believe that, as the permittee of NTSC Channel 2 in Fredericksburg, Texas, it would be entitled to the same paired DTV allotment as any other TV station, including its competitors in the San Antonio and Austin, Texas markets. It was not until the release of the Commission's *Sixth Report and Order* in April 1997 that Corridor discovered the Commission's new interpretation of Section 336, resulting in deletion of the DTV allotment for Fredericksburg, Texas.

However, Corridor received some solace from footnote 161 in the *Sixth Report and Order* and from footnote 26 in the *Fifth Report and Order* that it would receive "particular consideration" as a party whose application for this construction permit was on file as of October 24, 1991 and who was ultimately awarded a full service broadcast station license.

Indeed, Corridor's Joint Request for Approval of Settlement Agreement was filed on September 19, 1996, well prior to the Commission's adoption of the DTV Table of

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Allotments on April 3, 1997. That Joint Request was granted by the Commission on July 28, 1997, just three months later. Corridor is aware of only two other parties who had a TV application pending as of October 24, 1991 and whose applications have been granted since April 3, 1997.⁶ Thus, Corridor is in a relatively unique position and, even if other similarly situated TV applications (*i.e.*, those pending before October 24, 1991) are hereafter granted, there are certainly no floodgates to be opened that would require multiple new DTV allotments.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Corridor believes it is entitled to a DTV allotment because (1) there is nothing in Section 336 precluding such an allotment and, indeed, even the Commission did not think Section 336 precluded such an allotment when the proposed DTV Allotment Table was adopted in July 1996; and (2) in any event, Corridor is in the relatively unique position of having an application pending on October 24, 1991 and granted after April 3, 1997, thus qualifying for the "particular consideration" promised by the Commission in both the *Fifth* and *Sixth Reports and Orders*. The Commission stated its goal as to "promote and preserve free, universally available, local broadcast television in a digital world," noting that "DTV will also help ensure robust competition in the video market that will bring more choices at less cost to American consumers." *Fifth Report and Order*, ¶ 5.

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⁶ The two other stations are in Avalon, California (Pappas) and Sheridan, Wyoming (SJL of Montana Associates Ltd. Partnership). Pappas refers to a third such party in Charlottesville, Virginia, but it does not appear that the Commission has acted on any application there yet. However, Lindsay Television, Inc., the applicant in Charlottesville, has apparently filed an appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on this issue, D.C. Cir. No. 98-1105.

This station is also in the unique position of providing a first local service to the community of Fredericksburg, Texas, while competing in a marketplace that includes stations from the San Antonio and Austin, Texas television markets. Accordingly, allotment of a DTV channel to Corridor would clearly serve the public interest goals enunciated by the Commission and would further the chances for KBEJ to succeed as a new entrant in a highly competitive marketplace. Without a digital channel, Corridor would be at a severe competitive disadvantage. We request the Commission to reconsider its *Fifth Report and Order on Reconsideration* to this extent.

Respectfully submitted,

CORRIDOR TELEVISION, L.L.P.

By:

David M. Silverman

COLE, RAYWID & BRAVERMAN, L.L.P.

1919 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.

Suite 200

Washington, D.C. 20006

(202) 659-9750

Its Attorneys

December 7, 1998

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							TELEVISION VICE	EXISTING NTSC				DTV/ NTSC
STATE AND CITY	NTSC DTV CHAN CHA	DTV	DTV N POWER (kW)	ANTENNA HAAT (m)		DURING TRANSITION		SERVICE	NEW INTERFERENCE			
		CHAN			AREA (Sq km)	PEOPLE (thous)	AREA (Sq km)	PEOPLE	AREA (% NL Area)	PEOPLE (* NL Pop)	AREA MATCH (%)	
	TX DALLAS	39	38	355.9	512.0	25725	4019	25520	4016			
	TX DALLAS	58	36	417.2	438.0	23605	3971	23458	3971	1.4 0.1	0.1	100.0
	TX DECATUR	29	30	173.7	160.0	10986	3678				0.0	99.9
		10	13	6.3	352.0	21450	99	19950	3697 99	4.0	0.7	95.4
	TX DENTON	2	31	3275.9	412.0	40386	4218	37791	4179	0.0 0.0	0.0 0.0	99.B 100.0
	TX EAGLE PASS	16	18	50.0	85.0	1957	25			-		
	TX EL PASO	4	50	5000.0	475.0	39091	35	1957	35	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX EL PASO	7		3437.7	265.0		722	39727	722	0.0	0.0	97.4
		ģ	35	2010.2	582.0	24972	722	23682	722	0.0	0.0	99.7
	TX EL PASO	9 13	54	2282.7		40618	725	37799	724	0.0	0.0	99.9
				2202.1	265.0	23115	720	22034	720	0.0	0.0	99.7
	TX EL PASO	14 26 38 65	60	50.0	604.0	18187	715 714 629	17788	715	0.7	0.0	100.0
	TX EL PASO	26	51	126.5	457.0	15450	714	15425	714	0.2	0.0	99.6
	TX EL PASO	38	67	50.0	557.0	8534	629	8096	629	11.2	16.9	100.0
	TX EL PASO	65	39	91.5	557.0	12045	713	18637	713	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX FORT WORTH	5	43	3793.5	514.0	46940	4409	40583	4228	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX FORT WORTH	11	19	1587.0	509.0	41046	4246	35593	A153	0.0		
	WORTH	21	57	402.1	503.0	26374	4022	26250	4153 4019 3821	0.2 1.8	0.0	100.0
	TX FORT WORTH	52	42	365.6	328.0	14335	3803	14891	2022	1.8	0.1	100.0
	TX FREDERICKSBURG	2	38	5000.0	175.0	16312	163	13799	119		0.0	92.7
H	TX GALVESTON	22	31	411.7	566.0	28982	3655	28976	3654	0.0 0.0	0.0	99.7
									3034	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX GALVESTON	48	47	349.1	358.0	19582	3481	19145	3363	0.1	0.0	100.0
	TX GARLAND	23	24	277.6	348.0	12198	3082	11933	3001	0.1	0.2	100.0
	TX GREENVILLE	47	46	50.0	155.0	2737	73 687	2737	73	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX HARLINGEN	4		3169.6	396.0	39143	687	37259	686	0.0	0.0	100.0
	tx Harlingen	44	34	81.8	296.0	14453	657	14450	657	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX HARLINGEN	60	61	124.4	372.0	15628	662	15628	662	0.0		
	TX HOUSTON	2	35	3917.3	588.0	51691		45893	3865	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX HOUSTON	8	9	8.4	564.0	38469	3868	37963	3852		0.0	100.0
	TX HOUSTON	11	10	8.5	570.0	44636	3888	43677	3878	0.1	0.0	99.2
	TX HOUSTON	2 8 11 13	30	1716.1	588.0	45135	3899	42536	3869	0.0 0.0	0.0 0.0	99.7 100.0
			24	340.5	455.5		•				0.0	100.0
		14		349.5	438.0	23360	3740	23332	3740	0.2	0.0	100.0
	TX HOUSTON	20	19	412.7	552.0	26048	3766 [.]	26014	3766	0.2	0.0	100.0
	TX HOUSTON TX HOUSTON TX HOUSTON	26	27	408.5	594.0	30216	3817	30100	3807	0.8	0.0	100.0
	TX HOUSTON	39	38	408.5	594.0	28371	3780	28340	3779	2.0	0.1	100.0
	TX HOUSTON	61	46	372.2	443.0	23733	3725	23712	3725	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX IRVING	49	50	380.6	365.0	20841	3927	20667	3922	0.0		•
	TX JACKSONVILLE	56		415.8	482.0	21910	575	21763	C - 4	0.2	0.0	100.0
	TX KATY	51	52	145.1	500.0	21604	3711	21/63	2706	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX KERRVILLE	35	17	413.1	536.0	23673	1416	22867	3/06	0.0	0.0	100.0
	TX KILLEEN	62	ŝi	217.3	408.0	18826	563		1409	4.2	2.6	100.0
					100.0	10040	203	18703	3706 1409 562	0.0	0.0	99.9
	TX LAKE DALLAS TX LAREDO	55	41 14	153.6	142.0	10795	3660	10705	3644	0.0	0.0	98.7
	TX LAREDO	13	14 54		312.0	26403	140	25686	137	3.7	1.3	100.0
	IN MARBOO	13	74	466.3	280.0	20988	143	20302	142	0.2	0.0	100.0

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Sharon K. Mathis, a secretary with the law firm of Cole, Raywid & Braverman, L.L.P., do hereby certify that copies of the foregoing "Comments of Corridor Television, L.L.P. On Petition for Reconsideration Filed by Pappas Telecasting of Southern California, L.L.C." were sent via first class, postage prepaid, United States mail, this 7th day of December, 1998, to the following:

John Griffith Johnson, Jr., Esq.
Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP
1299 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., 10th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
Counsel to Pappas Telecasting of
Southern California, L.L.C. 20554

- * Susan Fox
 Senior Legal Advisor
 Office of Commissioner William E. Kennard
 Federal Communications Commission
 1919 M Street, N.W., #814
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Anita L. Wallgren
 Legal Advisor
 Office of Commissioner Susan Ness
 Federal Communications Commission
 1919 M Street, N.W., #832
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Helgi C. Walker Legal Advisor Office of Comm'r. Harold Furchtgott-Roth Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., #802 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Jane E. Mago Senior Legal Advisor Office of Commissioner Michael K. Powell Federal Communications Commission 1919 M Street, N.W., #844 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Richard Chessen
 Senior Legal Advisor
 Office of Commissioner Gloria Tristani
 Federal Communications Commission
 1919 M Street, N.W., #826
 Washington, D.C. 20554

- * Roy J. Stewart
 Chief, Mass Media Bureau
 Federal Communications Commission
 1919 M Street, N.W., #314
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Keith Larson
 Assistant Chief Engineer
 Mass Media Bureau
 Federal Communications Commission
 1919 M Street, N.W., #314
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Gordon W. Godfrey
 Mass Media Bureau
 Federal Communications Commission
 2000 M Street, N.W.
 Room 566
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * Bruce A. Franca
 Deputy Chief
 Office of Engineering & Technology
 Federal Communications Commission
 2000 M Street, N.W., #416
 Washington, D.C. 20554
- * R. Allan Stillwell
 Economic Advisor
 Office of Engineering & Technology
 Federal Communications Commission
 2000 M Street, N.W., #416
 Washington, D.C. 20554

* Via Hand Delivery

Marn M. Mathis
Sharon K. Mathis